

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Artisan's Guild

Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Naples Company Finds Lean Manufacturing Profitable

Client Profile:

The Thomas Riley Artisans' Guild is one of the best-known and respected companies in southwest Florida. Described as a premier manufacturing company for luxury residential homes, high-end interior designers, preferred architects, and general contractors, it includes a collection of master craftsmen and artisans that offer custom millwork, fine decorative finishes, architectural hardware, stone and wood flooring, and decorative plaster with "monumental quality craftsmanship and white-glove service." The 70 employees at the Naples, Florida, facility combine Old World techniques with state-of-the-art technology to create superior interior creations for an impressive list of clients that includes well-known personalities and some of the wealthiest people in the world.

Situation:

Artisans' Guild's overall goal was to increase output while eliminating defects. A second issue was that the company often gave services away, out of a desire to please their clients. A system was needed to capture payment for extra work the craftspeople often did while engineering a project or working on jobsites. New procedures needed to be developed that would allow artisans and engineers to track changes so they could be fairly compensated for additional labor. The system, however, had to be designed in a way that no client would ever be offended. Finally, in order to assure that work was completed according to the allocated procedure, company management wanted each of their team members to adopt Lean thinking so they could understand how their actions impacted the overall process. Artisans' Guild contacted the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Florida MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

Florida MEP project managers conducted two Lean 102 workshops to approximately 40 of the employees, which included classroom training and hands-on simulation. The workshops were designed to help the artisans understand the principles and fundamentals of Lean Manufacturing and were geared toward the job-shop environment. Next, the Florida MEP facilitated a Value Stream Map (VSM) event that developed current and future state maps of the value stream, identified high-priority areas for Lean implementation, and helped create a strategic plan for a company-wide Lean transformation. Following the VSM, a team of engineers, management, artisans, and installers participated in a Kaizen Blitz event that focused on defining the problem, understanding the magnitude of the problem, and developing an implementation plan. Ultimately the team concentrated on improving the information flow to and from the artisans and installers as well as a system to track changes and charge for extra work. The system would allow the company to give the customers exactly what they wanted without surprising or offending them.

Results:

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NIST is an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department's Technology Administration

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- * Hired a Lean Engineer to continue and sustain their Lean transformation.
- * Increased sales by \$200,000.
- * Produced cost savings of \$20,000.
- * Increased profit margins.
- * Increased customer satisfaction.

Testimonial:

"We had started to move toward Lean Manufacturing, but we knew we needed to bring in experts to help us through the entire process. The Florida MEP project managers made it easy to make the changes. They were professional, down-to-earth individuals who got along great with our artisans and made things easy to understand for everyone. I was impressed with the work they did and would certainly recommend the Florida MEP to any manufacturer looking for help in introducing Lean techniques. I was especially impressed because we are a totally custom shop and everything is done on a case-to-case basis, but the Florida MEP catered the program to us."

Matt Riley, Director of Client Relations